



Volunteer aims to breakdown stigma of mental health

Lighting up the volunteer world, Dr. Austin Mardon joined the Addiction and Mental Health Provincial Advisory Council (AMH PAC) because he has set some lofty volunteer goals. One of them is to advocate and influence on behalf of populations who struggle with mental health. Diagnosed with schizophrenia in 1992, Austin has overcome the stigma and challenges of mental health and developed a successful professional and voluntary career.

Offering a strong voluntary background, he has worked with a number of different organizations such as the Status of Persons with Disabilities, the Alberta College of Social Workers, the Alberta College of Social Workers, and he even volunteered to go to Antarctica to hunt meteorites.

The drive to join the AMH PAC isn't about earning money or status. Rather, Austin genuinely wants to make a difference by sharing his own personal experience with mental health. "I am excited by the possibility to influence. It is important to share the perspective of a lived experience, which is different from the professional perspective – there are vastly different perspectives between patient, family and health professional," says Austin.

Austin is particularly proud of his involvement with the newly-opened Addictions and Mental Health Access 24/7 clinic in Edmonton at the Royal Alexandra Hospital. "My Council is proud to have been the catalyst that spurred the idea of the Access 24/7 clinic at the Royal Alex. It was our recommendation that sparked life into this project," adds Austin.

In his spare time, Austin likes to volunteer and help students at his favourite charity, publish articles about mental health and entertain guests in his home. His most adventurous experience was a volunteer NASA expedition to Antarctica where he and his team found hundreds of meteorites. Since that expedition in 1983, Austin has been lighting up organizations with his dedicated volunteerism.

For more information on the Addiction and Mental Health Provincial Advisory Council, visit ahs.ca/advisorycouncils, or email pac.amh@ahs.ca.



Dr. Austin Mardon awarded the Order of Canada by then Governor General Michaëlle Jean, 2006.